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DEPARTMENT FOR NEA AND PRM

E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/19/2017
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREF](#) [SOCI](#) [EAID](#) [IZ](#) [JO](#)
SUBJECT: IRAQI ENROLLMENT IN JORDANIAN SCHOOLS

REF: A. AMMAN 3871
[1](#)B. AMMAN 3208

Classified By: Ambassador David Hale for Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

[1](#)1. (SBU) In response to lower-than-expected enrollment of Iraqis and anecdotal reports of stumbling blocks to Iraqi registration in Jordanian public schools (ref A), UNCHR and UNICEF convened a standing-room only meeting of NGOs and donors on September 18 to identify outstanding obstacles to Iraqi enrollment. UNHCR's deputy representative Peter Janssen and UNICEF emergency coordinator Jonathan Cunliffe asked NGOs working with Iraqis to identify specific problems Iraqis faced, and to name schools so that UNHCR and UNICEF could raise their concerns directly with the Ministry of Education. NGOs that work closely with Iraqis, including Save the Children, Mercy Corps, Relief International, International Relief and Development, and CARE were unable to identify more than a handful of individual cases in which Iraqis were currently unable to register. When asked about previously reported cases, they replied that most appeared to be individual instances of misinformation that had since been resolved.

[1](#)2. (SBU) When asked to explain the limited enrollment figures, NGO's identified three primary reasons: (1) a number of students have been out of formal educational systems for two or more years, and are electing not to return to school; (2) given the reported declining savings of Iraqi families, some school-age children work (illegally) to support their families; and (3) differences in the Jordanian curriculum make it more difficult for Iraqis to quickly acclimate to the Jordanian system.

[1](#)3. (SBU) During the meeting, Save the Children proposed a voucher system for providing school uniforms and stationery kits to needy Iraqi children who might not otherwise be able to afford the incidental costs of school enrollment. Save the Children and other NGOs said they had identified several local suppliers, and agreed to work with UNICEF to seek Ministry of Education support for an implementing mechanism during the remaining (recently extended) period for school registration. When pressed to estimate the number of additional Iraqi enrollments this program could generate, Save the Children hesitated, but conceded that at most 5,000 additional students could be recruited.

[1](#)4. (SBU) In a follow-on meeting to draft an agenda for the next joint UNHCR-UNICEF-Save the Children-USAID meeting with the MOE, Janssen and Cunliffe expressed frustration with the less-than-expected enrollment, and suggested that perhaps there were fewer Iraqis (or at least fewer school-age Iraqis) in Jordan than expected. They concluded that the handful of individual obstacles to registration raised in the preceding meeting were isolated -- not a structural or systemic issue that the Ministry of Education could impact. They

acknowledged to Emboffs that the MOE had acceded to all of their requests, and expressed their beliefs that future efforts need to be focused on the non-formal and informal education fronts.

15. (C) COMMENT: After some initial prodding and once a policy-level decision was made (ref B), the GOJ and the Ministry of Education have worked collaboratively with donors and the UN agencies. Initial expectations of immediate enrollment in excess of 50,000 may have been overly optimistic given the dearth of information about the demography and needs of the Iraqi population in Jordan. Regardless, Post will continue to follow Iraqi school enrollment closely, and work vigorously with the Ministry of Education, the UN, NGOs and other donors to identify ways to meet the educational needs of the displaced Iraqi community. Given the apparent exhaustion of mechanisms to expand enrollment in the formal sector, we will push the donor community and GOJ on the best means to support and advance non-formal education programs. END COMMENT

Hale